

Veggie Box Newsletter

Spring 2024 · Week 6 · Tuesday, April 2nd

The origins of the CSA, like so many agricultural practices in the United States, can be traced back to a Black farmer. Dr. Booker T. Whatley was born in Alabama in 1915 and growing up saw how small farms, particularly those owned by black folks, were disappearing due to expansion of mass agriculture. He earned a degree in agricultural studies at Alabama A&M University, then served in the Korean War where he built and operated a hydroponic farm to supply the troops with fresh produce. After his service he went on to earn a PhD in Horticulture from Rutgers University and later a law degree from Alabama A&M. Dr. Whatley is best known for his work to help farmers “grow smaller and smarter” and to focus on “internal resources” such as “the sun, air, rain, plants, animals, people, and all the other physical resources that are within the immediate environment of every farm” through a number of different methods. He first advocated for farmers to grow high-value crops like berries or heirloom strains instead of commodity crops that would compete with commercial agriculture. He created his regenerative farming systems, a holistic approach to farming in a way that doesn’t damage the land and incorporates practices such as crop rotation, topsoil regeneration, and groundwater conservation. In addition to regenerative farming, he pioneered the practice of Pick-Your-Own (also called U-Pick), something that you have probably done with your family at some point! He also created a “clientele membership clubs”, the original version of the CSA, in order to allow farmers to “plan production, anticipate demand & have a guaranteed market.” He recognized that a program like CSAs could benefit both the farmer and the consumer by connecting the two directly. Though often left out of history books, we have BIPOC farmers, horticulturalists, and scientists to thank for so many sustainable and community-based agriculture practices in use today.

Producer Spotlight *Highwater Farms*

At Highwater Farms, their mission is to create a sustainable relationship between the land, their products, and their customers. They work to provide heirloom and rare varieties of produce and flowers to customers via several channels in order to ensure freshness, availability, and convenience. All of their plants are chemical-free, pesticide-free, and herbicide-free. All farming practices are strategically implemented to address the health and safety of the land and the consumer. They grow exclusively in Lansing and strive to give back 5% of all sales to a rotating group of local charities and causes.

Crop Profile *Microgreens*

Microgreens are essentially seedlings of edible vegetables and herbs, and though miniscule in size, concentrated in nutrients. Studies have shown that microgreens are loaded with nutrients - up to 40 times more than the mature leaves of the same plants. They are different from sprouts because they are harvested without the roots. Usually, the seeds are grown in trays with soil or peat moss and harvested a few weeks after they are initially soaked depending on the variety. Microgreens are great on salads, sandwiches, and in smoothies! Chefs started utilizing these nutrient packed greens in the 80s in San Francisco and have grown in popularity all over the country and world since then. To make microgreens last, carefully dry them and store in an airtight container for up to a week.



What's in the Box?

Organic Daikon Radish, Lake Divide Farm, *Stockbridge*
Microgreens, Highwater Farms, *Lansing*
Organic Spring Mix, Monroe Family Organics, *Alma*
Organic Arugula, Green Wagon Farm, *Ada*
Organic Sweet Potatoes, Green Wagon Farm, *Ada*
Organic Swiss Chard, Green Wagon Farm, *Ada*
Organic Red Onions, Green Wagon Farm, *Ada*

Add-ons

Bread, Stone Circle Bakehouse, *Holt*
Meat Variety: Beef Strips, Heffron Farms, *Belding*

Recipes and Tips!

Wilted Chard with Shallots and Vinegar

- Veggie Box Swiss chard, ribs and stems separated from leaves
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup shallots, thinly sliced into rings (or Veggie Box onions)
- 2 garlic cloves, grated
- Kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons sherry vinegar or red wine vinegar

Cut Swiss chard stems into very small pieces. Tear leaves into 2" pieces and rinse well (you'll want some water still clinging to the leaves).

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Add chard stems, shallots, garlic, and season with salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are starting to soften but haven't taken on any color, about 2 minutes.

Add chard leaves, season with salt, and cook, tossing occasionally, until leaves are tender and have released some liquid, about 3 minutes (stems will have a bit of crunch). Mix in vinegar; taste and season with more salt if needed.



Crockpot Red Onion Jam

We've been giving you a lot of onions recently! A batch of slow cooker onion jam is a great way to turn any excess into a large batch of delicious, caramelized onions. Use onion jam to garnish steak or pork tenderloin, as a chip and cracker dip, or as a burger or sandwich topping.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1-1/2 lbs Veggie Box red onions, sliced
- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons fresh minced ginger
- 6 cloves Veggie Box garlic, minced
- salt
- cracked black pepper

Add oil and onion to crock pot; stir to coat. Cook on low for approx 8 hours (flavors will continue to develop the longer it cooks). Leave lid slightly askew or vented so some moisture will cook out. Stir occasionally to help break down onion and check bottom.

After onions have caramelized (turned completely soft, translucent and jammy, and smell very sweet), remove lid and increase heat to high. Add balsamic vinegar, sugar, ginger, garlic, and salt and pepper to taste. Cook, lid off, for at least another hour until reduced to jam consistency.

Recipe adapted from food.com